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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8154
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 0986
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 1525
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000155

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR Q LLUFTTIG
PORT OF SPAIN FOR LEGATT
SOUTCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: CONTINUED CONCERN OVER BOUTERSE'S NEXT STEPS

REFS: (A) PARAMARIBO 90 (B) PARAMARIBO 39 (D) PARAMARIBO
118

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR MARSHA E. BARNES, REASONS 1.4 (b)
& (d).

11. (SBU) Summary. Former military dictator and convicted narcotics trafficker Desi Bouterse's recent statements claiming current conditions in Suriname are similar to those just prior to his 1980 coup have heightened public unease over Suriname's future stability. Adding to the atmosphere was a recent military depot weapons theft portrayed by an influential editorial page as one in a series of destabilizing acts planned by a group, implying Bouterse's National Democratic Party (NDP), interested in seizing power through "undemocratic" means. Whether Bouterse would go so far as a violent power grab to protect himself from prosecution in the 1982 December murders case remains subject of much speculation. The sheer amount of chatter about his possible intentions reverberates in this small, sometimes hothouse society, creating sense that things are slightly off balance. End Summary.

CONCERNS SURROUNDING BOUTERSE CONTINUE

12. (SBU) At a February 24 celebration for the 26th anniversary of his military coup, Bouterse shocked the crowd by saying the conditions that existed just before the 1980 coup exist again today. He said patronage politics, criminality, and corruption, among other things, are leading the country into a deep crisis once again. After uttering these words, the silence was palpable; he then coyly stated that history would not repeat itself. He said that he and his fellow coup leaders stand ready, though, to pass on the ideals of the "revolution," which is how he describes his coup, to Suriname's next generation. At a political rally a week later, Bouterse said the results of the 2005 elections should be voided because the New Front coalition's campaign was financed by illegal funds, namely money laundering proceeds. He also claimed the head of Suriname's Intelligence Agency (CIVD) Colonel Johan Ceder, President Ronald Venetiaan's nephew, conducted arms-for-drugs deals with Brazilian gangs.

13. (C) The specter of armed action against the government was raised by the media just prior to Bouterse's speech when an unknown gang stole 150 grenades, 240 rounds of Bren ammunition, and 500 rounds of carbine ammunition from a military arms depot at the Ayoko military barracks located near Suriname's international airport. The ammunition is

considered out-dated and the quality of the grenades questionable. Sources say the arms are thought to be now located in western Suriname and that an "inside-job" is suspected, but no arrests have been made. Media speculation that a group intent on fomenting unrest stole the weapons caused a public stir. (COMMENT: Reporting in other channels reflects conflicting theories over the weapons theft, but on the street there is concern, which is perhaps a result of what the public remembers from the military period of the 1980's. End Comment.)

14. (C) Three days after the arms theft, the newspaper De West's influential weekly editorial page Keerpunt painted a worrying security picture. It expressed concern that groups within Suriname are planning to take power through "undemocratic" means and are attempting to solicit internal support from Suriname's interior to this end. It said it feared that violence in Guyana could spill into Suriname. The editorial claimed there were certain political parties, implying the NDP, unwilling to wait until 2010 election for a change in government and expressed concern over the unstable atmosphere in the National Assembly created by the NDP. (See ref A).

GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME NOT STANDING IDLY BY

15. (C) In recent weeks the Government of Suriname has stepped up its monitoring of its border with Guyana through increased joint police-military boat patrols along the Corantijn River. According to an Embassy source, GOS officials think the group responsible for the depot theft plans to smuggle the arms into Guyana. Another source,

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however, thinks the arms will stay in Suriname and that AK-47s stolen in Guyana may come here. The military patrols resulted in the seizure of 3.5 kilograms of marijuana from one Surinamer and two Guyanese and four boats on March 2.

16. (U) A squad of military personnel recently conducted a readiness exercise by marching through the streets of a high-crime neighborhood in Paramaribo. According to a military spokesperson, the exercise was one in a series designed to stem rising crime in some areas, and more such exercises will occur. The spokesman denied media speculation that the exercise was related to the December murder case or the military weapons theft.

COMMENT

17. (C) However short on details, the framework of Keerpunt speculation squares with information recently volunteered by Embassy sources. (See ref B). Although last fall's street protests and neighborhood rallies failed to rally a critical mass of support for Bouterse, few are prepared to believe that Bouterse has played his last card. There is increased chatter that Bouterse is planning more nefarious actions with a focus on gaining support from interior groups, specifically longtime Amerindian associates. Collaboration with Guyanese criminal elements remains a serious concern, as Bouterse has reportedly been spending significant time in western Suriname near the border. Despite these concerns, government officials still appear committed to prosecuting Bouterse for the December murders, possibly setting up a contentious showdown in the second half of this year when the trial is expected to begin. (See ref C).

BARNES